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CORONA Tech Wkg Grp
Set up by LMSD in August 1958 [] and Plummer of
Lockheed instigated).
RMB wanted Proj Hqs to be represented at its meetings.

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NRO review(s) completed.

The early satellites in the project are expected to weigh about 1,300 pounds, including the casing of the second stage. Its instrumented payload, Mr. Johnson said, will weigh "several hundred pounds"-- far heavier than any satellite yet launched by the United States but still lighter than Soviet satellites.

The project, Mr. Johnson said, could stretch over several years, but immediate plans call for launching at least a dozen satellites. If a third of these go into orbit around the earth, he said, "We will consider the project very successful."

The initial firings will be primarily to test the launching missile--a modified version of the Air Force's Thor intermediate range ballistic missile. Later, however, the satellites will contain "biomedical specimens" to obtain data for the man-in-space program being conducted jointly by ARPA and the new civilian space agency.

As part of the biomedical experiments, live animals will be sent into space and their recovery attempted. The first animals will be mice, but Mr. Johnson said that the fifth or sixth satellite was scheduled to carry a monkey.

Mr. Johnson clearly indicated that a solution to the recovery problem was believed imminent. But he gave no details on how it was to be accomplished.

The first recovery attempt will be made early next year, he said, and, if successful, the space capsule should land within a few hundred miles of the predicted impact point on earth.

To Pass Over Land Areas

Such precision becomes necessary because the satellites launched from Vandenberg AFB will be fired southward over the new Pacific missile range. In their resulting polar orbit, the satellites would pass over all the land areas of the world--including the Soviet Union.

Mr. Johnson said, however, that no arrangements were being made with foreign nations to return any of the Discoverer satellites because, "We think we have got it so well organized that we can pick a point in the ocean or the United States and have it land within a couple hundred miles."

The first satellite, shaped like a squat light bulb, will be launched by a two-stage rocket using a modified Thor missile as the first stage and a new rocket being produced by Lockheed Aircraft Corporation as the second.

Program to Open Site

The Discoverer program will open up the Vandenberg base as a launching site. However, Cape Canaveral, Fla. will be used for many launchings in which a polar orbit is not necessary. It was indicated that all of the initial Discoverer series will be launched from Vandenberg.

The polar orbit is advantageous for a reconnaissance satellite because the entire earth can be scanned from the satellite on the north to south orbit while the earth spins below on its axis from west to east. Recovery of a satellite is believed easier from the polar orbit.

Information gained in the Discoverer launchings will contribute to project Sentry, the Air Force satellite launching planned for the West Coast, it was said.

The Discoverer program will not affect present roles of the Army and Navy in satellite development. Today, T Keith Glennan, administrator of the N A S A, disclosed that the Army had been assigned to launch eight earth satellites next year ;using the lunar probe rocket Juno II which is to be fired for the first time Saturday.